

## News Release

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT

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### **State Low-Income Solar Program Honored with 2012 Green California Leadership Award for Energy Innovation**

*Creative Program Provides More Than 1,000 Low-Income Households with Solar Energy*

During the [Green California Summit](#) Leadership Awards Ceremony today at the Sacramento Convention Center, the California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) Solar For All California pilot program will be honored with a 2012 Green California Leadership Award for energy innovation. The CSD program uses innovative funding solutions through federal funding, state rebates and creative partnerships to address unequal access to residential solar energy for low-income families.

“By bringing together a diverse group of public and private partners, CSD has been able to offer potentially life-changing solar systems to some of California’s neediest families,” said California Health and Human Services Secretary Diana S. Dooley. “I applaud CSD for their ingenuity to continue serving low-income Californians through innovative means in these difficult economic times.”

“The Department is incredibly honored to receive a 2012 Green California Leadership award for this pioneering program,” said CSD Interim Director John A. Wagner. “CSD is committed to helping low-income families meet their home energy needs, and Solar For All California is an innovative solution to do just that by helping low-income households harness the power of the sun to reduce their energy bills.”

While middle and upper-income households have been able to take advantage of incentives and special financing options to install solar systems on their homes, these options remain beyond the economic reach for many low-income households. A [study](#) released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services stressed the need for greater access to available options for low-income households to reduce energy costs. This study reported low-income households can spend as high as 16.4 percent of their income on residential energy services, while an average household spends just 7.2 percent.

Solar For All California is a pilot program designed to help address this disparity by installing rooftop photovoltaic (PV) solar systems on the homes of more than 1,000 low-income families throughout California at no cost to the resident. This provides a long-term solution for low-income households to reduce their energy costs.

“I am a disabled senior citizen living alone so every chance I get, I look for ways to save. When I saw the notice that offered the opportunity of having a solar system to help reduce my energy costs, I jumped at the chance,” said G. Aguirre, a Solar For All California customer in Fresno. “I have seen a great difference in my energy bills. They range from \$15 to \$35 per month. It is always helpful being able to save.”

Solar For All California provides multiple benefits of PV solar power to participating low-income households. By design, the program targets low-income Californians, with a particular emphasis on households with vulnerable populations, which includes the elderly, households with very young children and people with disabilities. When PV solar systems are installed on these households, multiple problems are addressed:

- As a result of decreased household energy costs from lower electric bills, low-income households can save more money, making those funds available for other basic necessities like medicine or groceries.
- Vulnerable populations such as the elderly and very young children living in low-income households, who are more at risk for adverse health impacts due to extreme cold or hot temperatures, can afford to use heating and cooling appliances when needed.
- The program helps reduce low-income energy burden and improves household energy-efficiency, while greening these homes and helping to reduce harmful emissions.
- Low-income individuals are educated on the benefits of renewable energy, energy efficiency and the pride of generating their own electricity. Through this program, these households become part of the green movement and help spread that message within their community.

### **Solar For All California Program Background:**

CSD took advantage of creative partnerships, federal funding and solar rebates offered by the California Public Utilities Commission's California Solar Initiative and Sacramento Municipal Utility District to offer the solar systems at no cost to the low-income households. CSD set aside \$14.7 million, a portion of its annual federally-funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program allocation, under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to fund the pilot program, which kicked off in 2010. More than \$3.5 million has been leveraged through local and other partners, helping to increase the number of low-income households that will be able to take advantage of the program. It is anticipated that much more will be leveraged before the end of the program.

CSD partnered with four non-profit, community based organizations, who in turn are working with numerous public and private partners to deliver the PV solar systems and workforce training under the program. The four local non-profits are Community Resource Project in Sacramento, Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission in Fresno, North Coast Energy Services in Ukiah and Central Coast Energy Services in Watsonville.

It is anticipated the pilot program will wrap up this year and will greatly surpass original goals and estimates for the number of households that would be reached and the amount of renewable energy generated. The total number of households that will benefit from the program will nearly triple CSD's original goal set in 2010, which was to reach 500 low-income households.

At the end of the program approximately 1.9 megawatts of renewable energy will be installed benefitting nearly 1,500 low-income households, made up of both single-family homes and individual apartments in multi-family buildings, in nearly 20 counties around the state. Nearly 900 households have benefitted from solar installations to date.

The program also included the added benefit of developing green jobs, employing skilled workers and training low-income workers to become solar installers. Partnering with organizations like the Sacramento Employment and Training Agency, California Indian Manpower Consortium, Solar Living Institute and others, CSD's partnering community-based organizations arranged training for more than 150 individuals in various aspects of solar installation and design.

### **Green California Leadership Awards:**

Taking place at the Sacramento Convention Center on April 26 and 27, the 2012 Green California Summit & Expo is the largest annual event focused on green policy, practice and technology. In its sixth year, the Summit focuses on green government and its private sector partners in California, and will feature 150 companies offering green products and services, as well as keynote speakers, educational sessions, a special full-day green curriculum workshop, leadership awards and a Green Auto Mall.

The [Green California Leadership Awards](#) were established as a forum to recognize outstanding environmental achievements in government in cooperation with the Advisory Board for the Green California Summit, which is co-chaired by State and Consumer Services Agency Secretary Anna Caballero and California Environmental Protection Agency Secretary Matt Rodriguez. The Green California Summit Green California Leadership Awards acknowledges environmental achievements by government entities annually in eight categories: Climate Change, Waste Management, Energy Innovation, Transportation, Green Building, Water Management, Pioneer and Green Economic Development.

For more information on the Green California Leadership Awards or the Green California Summit please click [here](#).

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*CSD partners with a statewide network of community based organizations dedicated to helping low-income Californians achieve and maintain self-sufficiency, meet their home energy needs and reside in housing free from the dangers of lead hazards. CSD administers California's federal funding share for the Community Services Block Grant, Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, Weatherization Assistance Program and Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control Program. For more information about CSD and these programs, please visit [www.csd.ca.gov](http://www.csd.ca.gov).*